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TWO

DISCOURSES:

THE FIRST,

Of *Evil-Speaking*:

By His Grace,

JOHN, late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*.

Tillotson

The Second, Of

The Government of the Thoughts:

By His Grace,

JOHN, Lord Arch-Biſhop of *York*.

Sharp

Both Preach'd before Their Majeſties, 1694.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A SERMON againſt *Evil-Speaking.*

By His Grace

JOHN, late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury.*

TIT. III. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

GEneral Perſuaſives to Repentance and a good Life, and Invectives againſt Sin and Wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend Religion and Virtue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a Vicious courſe. But it muſt be acknowledged on the other hand, that theſe general Diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the Lives of men: Becauſe they fall among the Croud, but do not touch the Conſciences of particular Perſons in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Vertues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Phyſician, inſtead of applying particular Remedies to the Diſtemper of his Patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of Health; and earneſtly perſuade him to be well: without taking his particular Diſeaſe into conſideration, and preſcribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt take to task the great and common diſorders of their Lives, and repreſent their faults to them in ſuch a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the com-

mon and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-ſpeaking*, by which men contract ſo much guilt to themſelves, and create ſo much trouble to others; And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach*, *that hath not offended with his tongue?* Ecclus. 19. 16. *In many things*, ſaith St. *James*, James 3. 2. *we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

But how few have attain'd to this Perfection? And yet unleſs we do endeavour after it, and in ſome good meaſure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the ſame *Apoſtle* tells us, James 1. 26. *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.*

For the more diſtinct handling of this Argument, I ſhall reduce my Diſcourſe to theſe *Five* Heads.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it conſiſts.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man.*

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Cauſes* and *Effects* of it.

Fourthly, I ſhall add ſome further Conſiderations to diſſwade men from it.

Fifthly, I ſhall give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I ſhall conſider *what this Sin or Vice of evil ſpeaking here forbidden by the Apoſtle, is:* μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and ſlander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice conſiſts in ſaying things of others which tend to their diſparagement and reproach, to the taking away or leſſening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things ſaid be true or not. If they be falſe, and we know it, then it is down right *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*, and ſo much the more injurious, becauſe really groundleſs and undeſerved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be ſo, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's

bour's reputation: And it is a fault to ſay the evil of others which is true, unleſs there be ſome good reaſon for it beſides: Becauſe it is contrary to that charity and goodneſs which *Chriſtianity* requires to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, It is *Evil-ſpeaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the firſt Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; becauſe the Man that is evil ſpoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *Reviling*: The latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting*.

And Laſtly, Whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of down-right reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of commendation: For ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: For many times the deepeſt Wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking queſtions, *Have you not heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more, I only ask the queſtion:* Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe it*, if you will believe *them*: And thus many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe and ſuch like Arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing mens Reputation, yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of Slander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary Men a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what faſhion a Slander is dreſs'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminiſh his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text*.

II. We will conſider *the extent of this Prohibition to*

ſpeak evil of no man; and the due *bounds and limitations of it.* For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The Queſtion is, In what Caſes by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity; as, for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to our ſelves or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccl. 19. 8. *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not*, that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal Caſes wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this Prohibition in the *Text.*

Firſt, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be ſo fit for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will problably make no other uſe of this diſcovery but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the beſt teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Caſe the Son of *Sirach* adviſeth to reveal mens faults; *Eccluſ.* 19. 13, 14, 15. *Admoniſh a friend*, ſays he, *it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admoniſh a friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again: Admoniſh a friend, for many times it is a ſlander; and believe not every tale.*

But

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner as if we did it to ſhew our *Authority* rather than our *Charity*. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application ſo to manage the buſineſs of Reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewiſe is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the publick good, or the prevention of ſome great evil ſhould require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtifie a voluntary accuſation: otherwiſe it hath always among well-manner'd People been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward Informer concerning the miſdemeanors of others. *Magiſtrates* may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their Friends and Confidents.

But when a man is call'd to give teſtimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in ſuch Caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publiſh the faults of others in our own neceſſary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal another's faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed to ſave the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other mens. We are *to love our neighbour as our ſelves*; ſo that the love of our ſelves is the Rule and Meaſure of our love to our neighbour, and therefore *firſt*, otherwiſe it could not be the *Rule*. And it

would be very well for the World, if our Charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another Man's Reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a third Perſon, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: But even in this caſe we ought to take great care that the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no further than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable Caſes, this Prohibition doth not, I think, hinder, but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one Friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others: And the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports, and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are the uſual Caſes in which it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like Caſes, the Tongues of Men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III. place, to conſider *the evil of this practice*, both in the *Cauſes* and the *Conſequences* of it.

Firſt, We will conſider the *Cauſes* of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil Roots.

Firſt, One of the deepeſt and moſt common *Cauſes* of *evil ſpeaking*, is *ill nature* and cruelty of diſpoſition: And by a general miſtake, *Ill nature* paſſeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wiſdom*, tho' in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as *Vice* and *Vertue*.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Man-

Mankind, than the general proneneſs of men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* ſays) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide, which ſhews humane Nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it ſelf in *Satyr* and Cenſure, than in Praiſe and *Panegyrick*. When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men: But in the way of *Invective*, the invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more eaſie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lie down and make ſport for others.

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt Meetings and Viſits, after the neceſſary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to ſit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sawce* of Converſation, and all Diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull, which hath not ſomething of *piquancy* and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſome body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight; though at the ſame time they have ſo much Juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much Wit, as to conclude that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another Place and Company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Caſe, all Parties ſeem to be agreed that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the Reputation of their Adverſaries: And tho' they all pretend to be *Chriſtians*, and the *Diſciples of Him* who taught nothing but *kindneſs*, and *meekneſs*, and *charity*, yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſalvage and murderous diſpoſition they will flie at one anothers Reputation, and tear it in pieces: And whatever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another

another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raiſe againſt it; and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? *It is very well*, ſay they, *if it be true; I ſhall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a good man your ſelf, but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that ſo the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, tho' all are to blame in this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the *Zealots* of all *Parties* have got a *ſcurvy Trick* of lying for the Truth.

But of all ſorts of People, I have obſerved the *Prieſts* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt Faith for a luſty Falſhood and Calumny. Others will bandy a falſe Report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a Lye, and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. *John* in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that *ill nature* lies at the root of this *Vice* is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it our ſelves we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true.* But in the mean time we give it our *Paſs*, and venture to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cauſe of the commonneſs of this Vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves, in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our *Bleſſed Saviour*

ſpeaking

ſpeaking of the evil of the *laſt days*, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of Charity among men; *Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the Love of many ſhall wax cold*, Mat. 24. 12. When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them, if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

Thirdly, Another ſource of this Vice is *Malice* and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Paſſion they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpiteful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Paſſions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay, many are ſo *Deviliſh* as to invent and raiſe falſe Reports on purpoſe to blaſt Mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. *James* tells us, that the ſlanderous *Tongue is ſet on fire of Hell*: And the *Devil* hath his very *Name* from *Calumny* and falſe Accuſation: and it is his *Nature* too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil Spirit among men: Nay, the *Scripture* tells us, that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good Men before God; as he did *Job*, charging him with *Hypocriſie* to God himſelf; *Who*, he knows, *does know the hearts of all the children of men*,

Fourthly, Another *Cauſe* of evil ſpeaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obſcures *them*, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in *their* light, and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their Vertues may not ſcorch *them*. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the Ruins of other mens Reputation: And therefore as ſoon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently

ſently go to ſend it abroad by the firſt *Poſt*: For the ſtring is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through *City* and *Country*; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould overtake it.

Fifthly, Another *Cauſe* of evil-ſpeaking is *Impertinence* and *Curioſity*; an itch of talking and medling in the affairs of other men, which do no wiſe concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a piece of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of ſomething better to talk of, and becauſe their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Laſtly, Men do this many times out of *wantonneſs*, and for *diverſion*. So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous Tongue *bites like a Serpent*, and *wounds like a Sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to ſporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themſelves, and this only to divert themſelves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this ſort of men to diſtracted Perſons; *As a mad man*, ſaith he, *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; the LXX render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighour, and ſaith, Am I not in ſport?* Such, and ſo bad are the Cauſes of this Vice. I proceed to conſider in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Conſequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

Firſt, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are ſlander'd, To them it is certainly a great *injury*, and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no ſmall *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though we

ſhould

ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; becauſe the Vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the Reproach, and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the Vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after ill impreſſions are once made. The ſolicitous Vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an *after-game*; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill, than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that deſcends to a man's Children and Poſterity; becauſe the good or ill Name of the Father is derived down to them, and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemiſh'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no conſcience to rob his innocent Children of the beſt part of this ſmall Patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their Fathers ſake, if his Reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blaſt a Man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Poſterity? Can we make a Jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? Of an injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe in ſuch a Caſe no Repentance will be acceptable without Reſtitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our ruin in the other.

I will put the Caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is conſiderably ſtain'd, tho' never ſo deſervedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds, but the matter, by paſſing through ſeveral hands, is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add ſomething to it.

But, beſides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the conſequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and deſperate Quarrels. This reaſon the wiſe Son of *Sirach* gives why we ſhould defame no man: *Whether it be*, ſays he, *to a friend or to a foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and obſerved thee*, *Eccluſ.* 19. 8, 9. that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, *and when the time cometh he will ſhew his hatred*; that is, he will take the firſt opportunity to revenge it. At

At the beſt, it is always matter of *Grief* to the Perſon that is defam'd: And *Chriſtianity*, which is the *beſt-natur'd Inſtitution* in the World, forbids us the doing of thoſe things whereby we may *grieve one another*. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit even of a wiſe and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more ſenſible is he of this hard uſage; becauſe he never treats others ſo, nor is he conſcious to himſelf that he hath deſerved it.

Secondly, The *Conſequences* of this Vice are as bad or worſe to *our ſelves*. Whoever is wont to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe whom he deſires to pleaſe; who, if they be wiſe enough, will conclude that he ſpeaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themſelves, no man could be ſo blind as not to ſee this.

And it is very well worthy of our conſideration, which our *Saviour* ſays in this very Caſe, That *with what meaſure we meet to others, it ſhall be meaſur'd to us again*, Mat. 7 and that many times *heaped up*, and *running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind do uſe more ſtrict juſtice and equality, than in *rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing*.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than Words. A reproachful and ſlanderous Speech hath coſt many a Man a *Duel*, and in that the loſs of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loſs of his own Soul: And I have often wonder'd that among *Chriſtians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And tho' neither of theſe great miſchiefs ſhould happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good-will he may come to ſtand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own ſafety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil ſpeaking*. *What man is he*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood*, Pſal. 34. 12, 13.

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over

us from God. If we allow our ſelves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. *James* expreſly tells us, *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that mans Religion is vain*, Jam. 1. 26. And St. *Paul* puts *Slanderers* and *Revilers* amongſt thoſe that *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*. And our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath told us, That *by our words we ſhall be juſtified, and by our words we ſhall be condemned*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. To which I will add the counſel given us by the *Wiſe man*, *Refrain your tongue from the back-biting, for there is no word ſo ſecret that ſhall go for nought, and the mouth that ſlandereth ſlayeth the Soul*, Wiſdom of Solomon, *c.* 1. *v.* 11. I proceed in the

IVth place, to add *ſome further Arguments and Conſiderations to take men off from this Vice*: As,

Firſt, That the uſe of *Speech* is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and beſtowed upon him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe: That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Pſalmiſt*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *glory*, therewith we *praiſe God* and *bleſs Men*. Now to *bleſs* is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of *Speech*, and turn our *glory* into ſhame, when we abuſe this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſie obligation, but not to ſpeak ill requires only our Silence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others: The expence deters many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him; eſpecially if it be conſider'd how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous & reproachful word.

Thirdly, Conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and con-

confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praiſe him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteouſneſs to Men, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely, heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere*, *He knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.*

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy Conſcience *Man*, and ſay whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every Man's, eſpecially every good Man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd, and not to be hardly ſpoken of tho' it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable than that known *Rule*, *What thou wouldſt have no man do to thee*, *that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lie open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no Occaſion, no Example of this barbarous uſage of one another. There are very few ſo innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among Men have ſome little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the railery of a mimical and malicious Wit: Therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon our ſelves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their Shoulders and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own Faults: And when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule*, *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

Laſtly conſider, That it is in many caſes as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this pupoſe; *Talk not of other mens lives:*

lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burſt thee, Eccluſ. 19. 10. I ſhall in the V*th* and *laſt* place, *give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.*

Firſt, Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know. Whenever you poſitively accuſe and *endite* any man of any *Crime*, tho' it be in private and among Friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your *Oath*, becauſe God ſees and hears you. 'Tis not only Charity, but, Juſtice and regard to truth do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill Report is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it. For tho' you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lye*. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon *common Fame*, which for the moſt part is falſe, but almoſt always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt Caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome Perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-ſpeaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs, and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be aſhamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe that he to whom you have done this Injury is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether in the change of humane affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no Conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

Thirdly, Let us accuſtom our ſelves to pity the Faults of Men, and to be truly ſorry for them, and then we ſhall

take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, conſidering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our ſelves alſo are liable to be tempted: Conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a Puniſhment every fault and miſcarriage is to it ſelf; and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Chriſtian*, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt enemies; and if he be ſo, he will diſcover them no further than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

Fourthly, When ever we hear any man evil-ſpoken of, if we know any good of him let us ſay *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preſerve the Credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the Reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil-ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities ſhould be mention'd together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented; and an indifferent Man may be made a Monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a Wiſe man, but his over-ſights and follies; nothing in a Good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould heap together all the paſſionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the beſt man; all that he had ſaid or done amiſs in his whole Life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his Wiſdom and Vertues; the man in this diſguiſe would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*. And yet if his Life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues ſet over-againſt his failings and infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill qualities are, it is but juſt that with all this heavy load of faults he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real Virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight

light to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *Buſy-bodies*, and thoſe that love to talk of other mens Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their Quality, then divert the diſcourſe ſome other way; or if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it, you may ſufficiently ſignifie that you do not like it,

Sixthly, Let every man mind himſelf, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thy ſelf, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionyſius*, who would fain have had a famous *Philoſopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and *Dionyſius* bad him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was return'd into *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leiſure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the World.

Laſtly, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our Lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak *finely*, but *fitly*. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to ſpeak: Uſe great Caution and Circumſpection in this matter: Look well about thee, on every ſide of the thing, and on every Perſon in the Company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing: or ſo ſtiff in converſation, as to drop nothing but *Aphoriſms* and *Oracles*: Eſpecially among Equals and Friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a Man had the underſtanding of an *Angel*, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of *Wiſdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end we ſhould endeavour to get our minds furniſh'd with

matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others: And if we have but a Mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a Field large enough for innocent Converſation; ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of Mankind: And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the Fool to gratifie any body whatſoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. But becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it: I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

Firſt, Some pretend mighty Injury and Provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all Men oughteſt to abſtain from it: But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuſe of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, That if this Doctrine were practiſed, Converſation would be ſpoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant Diſcourſe and Entertainment.

I anſwer, The Deſign of this Diſcourſe is to redreſs a great Evil in Converſation; and that I hope which mends it will not ſpoil it. And however, if Mens Tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a great deal leſs than we do, both of our ſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might, for all that, live comfortably, and in good health, and ſee many good days. *David*, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking; *Pſal.* 34. 12, 13. *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.*

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence!* And the more any Man conſiders this, the truer he will find it: and whenever we are ſerious, we our ſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a Man examines himſelf impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make Reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the *Bleſſed Sacrament*,

crament, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours*; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

Thirdly, There is yet a more ſpecious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can eſcape the tongues of Men; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place: Becauſe by this means one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men who are ſo bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of God, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of Reproach from men: beſides that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way, to puniſh one fault by another. But let no man encourage himſelf in an evil way with this hope, that he ſhall eſcape the cenſure of men. When I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the World to chaſtiſe them that do ill; and tho' we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil-doings. I wiſh we could but be perſuaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be ſufficiently laſh'd for their Faults, tho' we ſate by and ſaid nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good men ſhould be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this puniſhment upon one another. Therefore, let no man preſume upon Impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man deſpair but that this buſineſs will be ſufficiently done one way or other. I am very much miſtaken, if we may not ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Juſtice in this kind.

And here, if I durſt, I would fain have ſaid a word or two concerning that more publick ſort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, ſo much in faſhion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible ſort of men. Yet thus much, I hope, may be ſaid without offence, that how much ſoever men are pleas'd to ſee others abuſed in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: However, I cannot but hope that every man that impartially conſiders muſt own it to be a fault of a very high nature, to revile thoſe whom God hath placed in Autho-

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rity over us, and *to ſlander the footſteps of the Lord's anointed:* Eſpecially ſince it is ſo expreſly written, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy People.*

Having repreſented the great evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occaſions for the future; and ſo turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making ſo good an uſe of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil ſpoken of.

Are we innocent? We may ſo much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the Pattern of our *Bleſſed Saviour, Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but commited himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

We may conſider likewiſe, that tho' it be a misfortune to be evil-ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it and not ours, and therefore ſhould not put us into Paſſion, becauſe another man's being injurious to me is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſie to my ſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon our ſelves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to loſe thy Patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one Virtue becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious as do endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as *Plato* ſaid he would do in that caſe; *Live ſo, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and my ſelf to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our Duty. Many are ſo taken up with the deep *Points* and *Myſteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of human Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the *Chriſtian Religion* hath made them inſeparable. True *Faith* is neceſſary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the *one* never ought to be preſs'd to the prejudice of the *other*.

I foreſee what will be ſaid, becauſe I have heard it ſo often ſaid in the like caſe; that there is *not one word of Jeſus Chriſt in all this.* No more is there in the *Text*. And yet I hope that *Jeſus Chriſt* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws*, and the *Duties* enjoin'd by the *Chriſtian Religion* are inculcated upon us.

But ſome men are pleaſed to ſay, that *this is mere Morality*: I anſwer, that this is *Scripture-Morality* and *Chriſtian-Morality*,

Morality, and who hath any thing to ſay againſt *that*? Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a *Duty*; and in the practice of a *Sin* ſo clearly condemn'd by it, as this of *evil-ſpeaking* is.

But becauſe *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged Sword*, yea ſharper than *Calumny* it ſelf; and pierceth the very Hearts and Conſciences of men, laying us open to our ſelves, and convincing us of our more ſecret, as well as our more viſible Faults; I ſhall therefore at one view repreſent to you what is diſperſedly ſaid concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God*.

And I have purpoſely reſerved this to the laſt, becauſe it is more perſwaſive and penetrating than any Humane Diſcourſe. And to this end be pleas'd to conſider in what company the *Holy Ghoſt* doth uſually mention this *Sin*. There is ſcarce any *black Catalogue* of *Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them; in the company of the very worſt *Actions* and moſt irregular *Paſſions* of men. *Out of the heart*, ſays our *Saviour*, Mat. 15. 19. *proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, falſe witneſs, evil-ſpeakings*. And the *Apoſtle*, Rom. 1. 29. ranks *back-biters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*; and with thoſe of whom it is expreſly ſaid, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. that *they ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*.

And when he enumerates the Sins of *the laſt times*, 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3. *Men*, ſays he, *ſhall be lovers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters, evil-ſpeakers, without natural affection, perfidious, falſe accuſers*, &c. And which is the ſtrangeſt of all, they who are ſaid to be guilty of theſe great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apoſtle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for ſo it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof*. So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*, and yet at the ſame time to live in a moſt palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion*: As if any pretence to *Myſtery*, and I know not what extraordinary *attainments* in the knowledge of *Chriſt*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and ſet them above the Vertues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* ſo frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the *blackeſt Crimes*; ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly ſhut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God*? and can we allow our ſelves in the common

practice

practice of a *Sin*, than which there is hardly any fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more ſeverely reprov'd, and more odiouſly branded in that *Holy Book.*

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe *Texts*, Pſal. 15. 1. *Who ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our *Saviour* ſays, that *of every idle word we muſt give an account in the day of Judgment*; that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemn'd?* What can be more ſevere than that of St. *James? If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The *Sin* which I have now warned Men againſt, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*; and the *Duty* which I have now been perſuading you to, is eaſie for every man to underſtand, not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of God to practiſe; and moſt reaſonable for all *Men*, but eſpecially for all *Chriſtians*, to obſerve. It is as eaſie as a *reſolute ſilence* upon juſt occaſion, as reaſonable as *prudence* and *juſtice* and *charity*, and the preſervation of *peace* and *good-will* among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſible an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Conſiderations, let us every one of us be perſwaded to take up *David*'s deliberate Reſolution, *Pſal.* 31. 1. *I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we ſhould ſoon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice*, together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many conſiderable Vertues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conſcience of his *Words* ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions.* And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon of that ſaying of St. *James*, and with which I ſhall conclude: *If any man offend not in Word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; To whom be glory for ever, *Amen.*

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BRITISH 9 JY 74 MUSEUM

A

SERMON

About the

Government of the Thoughts,

Preach'd before the

KING *and* QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

The 4*th* of *March*, being the 2*d Sunday* in *LENT*, 169¾.

By the Most Reverend Father in God, *JOHN* Lord Arch-Bishop of *York*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON

About the

Government of the Thoughts,

Preach'd before the

KING and *QUEEN.*

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of Life.

THE Argument with which this Audience was entertained the laſt *Lord's Day*, being the *Government of the Tongue*; I cannot think it improper or unſeaſonable for me, who have the Honour to come next, to treat about the *Government of the Thoughts*; There being a near relation between theſe two, and a neceſſary dependance of the one upon the other,

Our *Words* indeed are more eaſily governed than our *Thoughts*, becauſe they are more in our Power. But it will be impoſſible either to govern our *Words*

or our *Actions*, as we ſhould, unleſs we firſt bring our *Thoughts* in ſome meaſure under Government.

I muſt confeſs this Argument of the *Government of the Thoughts*, though it be a very uſeful, yet it ſeems alſo a very nice and difficult one, through the great variety of Caſes, ariſing from Mens different Tempers, which will not come under the ſame Rules, and yet ought to be provided for. But however, this ſhall not diſcourage me from undertaking this Argument; it ſhall only make me more careful as to what I ſay about it. That is, to have reſpect, as much as I can to all ſorts of Tempers, and to deliver what I have to ſay with ſo much Plainneſs, that every Body may go along with me.

The *Words*, upon which I ground my Diſcourſe, are thoſe of *Solomon*, which I have read unto you, and which contain one of thoſe Precepts that he lays down for the Religious Conduct of our Lives. *Keep* (ſaith he) *thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſ of Life.*

Not to trouble you with what others have ſaid upon this Text, I take the true Meaning of it to be this.

By the [*Heart*] here, which we are exhorted to *keep*, we are to underſtand the *Inward Thoughts and Motions*, and *Affections* of our Souls or Spirits; all which in the inſpired Writings are conſtantly ſaid to be ſeated in the *Heart*. This undoubtedly is the Scripture Notion of the *Heart*.

And when we are here bid to *keep our Hearts with all diligence*, I think there is no queſtion to be made, the Meaning is, That we ſhould diligently attend to the Thoughts and Motions, and Affections of our Minds; that we ſhould watch them narrowly, leſt at any time we ſhould give our Conſent to ſomething we ought not. This is the Meaning of *keeping our Hearts with all diligence*.

And then a Reaſon is added, why it concerns us thus to keep them. And that is this. Becauſe *out of the heart are the iſſues of life*. What is the Meaning of that Phraſe? Plainly this. The Iſſues, the Fruits, the Effects

Effects that are ſhewn in our Lives and Converſation do certainly proceed from the Heart, and therefore, accordingly as that is well or ill *guarded* or *kept*, ſo will our Lives and Converſations be. The Goodneſs or Badneſs of our Lives doth altogether depend upon the attending or not attending to the *Thoughts*, and Motions, and Inclinations of our Minds. As our Caution and Watchfulneſs in this Point is greater or leſs, ſo will our Courſe of Life be better or worſe. And therefore it concerns us all, that mean to live well, to be infinitely careful in this Matter.

This is a plain Account of the Advice that is here given us. So that you ſee, if I mean to diſcourſe pertinently to my Text, my Argument muſt be (what I ſaid) the Care, and Management, and *Government* of our *Thoughts*, as they fall under a Religious Conſideration.

In treating of this Argument there ſeem to me *Two* Things needful to be done.

Firſt, To give an Account what Power a Man hath over his own *Thoughts*.

Secondly, To ſhew wherein the Art of *Governing* of them doth conſiſt.

It is indeed this *ſecond* thing which my Text naturally leads me to ſpeak to: But I cannot ſpeak to that to any purpoſe, till I have made way for it by clearing the *firſt*. It is in vain to give Rules about the *Government* of our *Thoughts*, till we know how far we have Power over them; how far they fall, or do not fall, under our Conduct and Management.

And I muſt needs ſay, that moſt of thoſe I have met with, that have diſcourſed about the *Government of Thoughts*, by not enquiring into, and ſetling this Point, have been ſo far from benefiting all their Hearers, that deſired to receive benefit by their good advices, that to ſeveral of them they have done harm; becauſe as to them their advices have been perfectly unpracticable. Now thoſe that by their own Expe-

rience found them to be ſo, inſtead of conſidering that that Teacher might be in a miſtake, or that he did not ſufficiently weigh and examine the Caſe of all Perſons he gave his advice to, have peremptorily concluded that they themſelves were in the fault, and therefore they were in an evil Condition, becauſe they found themſelves not able to live up to what was adviſed them.

The *firſt* Queſtion then is, How far a Man hath power over his own Thoughts. There is not indeed any ſingle Anſwer to be given to this Queſtion, that will fit all Men. For that is impoſſible. It would be as unreaſonable to demand it, as it would be to require of a Workman to make a Garment, that ſhould fit all ſorts and ſizes of Men.

Some Men by the very Principles of their Make and Conſtitution, are much better able to govern their Thoughts than others. Some that are naturally weaker, have by long uſe and many tryals obtained a greater power over their Thoughts than others. Again, the ſame Perſons that at ſome times have a greater power over the motions of their Minds, may at other times have a leſs Command over them; and this according as their Health, or their Buſineſs, or a hundred Contingencies of outward things do affect them. So that all that can be done, as to this matter, is to lay down ſome general Propoſitions, which every Body is to apply to himſelf as there is Occaſion. And Five of this kind I have to offer, and which, I think, will take in all, or the greateſt part of what belongs to this Argument.

The *firſt* Propoſition I lay down is this, That the firſt Motions of our Minds are very little, if at all, in our power.

By the *firſt Motions of our Minds*, I mean thoſe ſudden Thoughts, or Apprehenſions, or Paſſions, or Deſires, which are excited in our Minds by any Object that is at that time preſented to our Imagination. As to theſe, I ſay, we are not ſo much Maſters of our ſelves as to be able to ſtop them; nay though perhaps they

they be very irregular. And the Reaſon is, becauſe they are produced ſo quick, that there is not time enough given for Reaſon to interpoſe.

There is no neceſſity indeed that a Man ſhould give Conſent to theſe Motions; but as for their coming into his Mind, he can no more help it, than he can help his preſent Temper, or the preſent Circumſtances he is ingaged in.

Thus for Inſtance. Do you think it poſſible for a Man that is of a Fiery Paſſionate Temper, to avoid the feeling a ſudden Reſentment of Anger ariſing in his Mind, if he meets with any unexpected Affront, or other great Provocation? Or for a Man that deſires to be well thought of, not to entertain ſome Vanity of Imagination, when he hears himſelf commended or flatter'd? Or for a Man that is addicted to Pleaſures, not to feel ſome irregular Inclinations in himſelf towards the gratifying his Appetites in thoſe things, when he hath all the Temptations before him? And thus in all other Caſes.

I grant indeed that a Man by long conſideration, and a ſerious exerciſing himſelf in the ways of Vertue and Piety, may bring himſelf to that Temper, that he ſhall not have ſo many irregular undecent Motions in his own Mind, upon any occaſion whatſoever, as he was wont to have; and that thoſe that were formerly *Temptations* to him, will at laſt be none: But ſtill I ſay, the firſt Motions and Workings of his Mind, however they be occaſioned, are in a great meaſure out of his power; he cannot ſtop them; and therefore the *Art* of *governing* his *Thoughts* doth not lye there.

The *ſecond* Propoſition I lay down is this, When a Man's Mind is vigorouſly affected and poſſeſſed, either with the outward Objects of ſenſe, or with inward Paſſions of any kind, in that Caſe he hath little or no Command of his Thoughts. His Mind at that time will be in a manner wholly taken up with that it is then full of: Nor will he be able, till thoſe Impreſſions be worn off, to think freely of what he pleaſeth.

Thus for Inſtance, When a Man is under a ſharp, tormenting Pain; as he cannot avoid the *feeling* of that Pain, ſo neither can he avoid the *thinking* of it. When one is full of Grief for the loſs of a dear Relation; or tranſported with Paſſion for ſome unworthy uſage he hath met with: It is in vain to ſay, Pray think not of theſe Matters; for theſe things muſt and will in a great meaſure imploy his Thoughts, till his Paſſions do cool, and the Impreſſions that cauſed them be vaniſhed.

Thus for a Man to come from ſome buſineſs in which he is more than ordinarily concerned, or from the hearing ſome very good or very bad News; I ſay, to come freſh from this to the ſaying his Prayers: I do not, I cannot wonder, that in this caſe his Mind will be much upon his *Buſineſs*, or his *News*, notwithſtanding all his Endeavours to the contrary.

For the Nature of Man is ſuch, that he cannot ſo of a ſudden turn his mind from one *Buſineſs* to another; but that if he did cloſely and vigorouſly apply himſelf to the firſt *Buſineſs*, his Thoughts will for ſome time run upon it, even after he hath applied his Mind to the other.

I do not deny, but that a Man may often ſo order his Affairs, as to be able to keep his Mind clear and free from ſuch Prepoſſeſſions as I am now ſpeaking of, ſo as that when he comes to apply himſelf to any *Buſineſs* he hath a mind to, he may intend it with his whole Might. But this I ſay, If our Minds be once engaged with warm Thoughts about any thing; it is very hard if not impoſſible, to get them diſengaged on a ſudden. So that the *Art* of *Governing* our *Thoughts* doth not much lie in that neither.

Thirdly, There are ſome Caſes likewiſe, where a Man's Thoughts are in a manner forced upon him, from the preſent Temper and Indiſpoſition of his Body. So that though he be in no Paſſion, though there be no unuſual Objects of Senſe that excite thoſe Thoughts in him; nay, though he never ſo much reſolve not to think upon thoſe things; yet ſo long as that

that Habit of Body laſts, he cannot avoid thoſe kind of Thoughts: So that in this Caſe alſo, there is little room left for the *Government* of *Thoughts*.

That which I now ſay, happens frequently, not only in all ſorts of Diſtempers where the Brain is viſibly diſturbed, as in Feavers, and the like; which often cauſe a thouſand delirous Fancies, and ſometimes down-right Madneſs and Diſtraction: But alſo in other Caſes where there ſeems to be no Feaver, or other viſible Diſtemper; nor doth the Brain, as to other matters, ſeem to be at all diſorder'd; but the Perſons in all appearance, are ſound both in Body and Mind.

And this is the Caſe of ſome deeply *Hypochondriac* Perſons; many of which will be haunted with a *Sett* of *Thoughts* and *Fancies*, that they can by no means get rid of, though they deſire it never ſo earneſtly.

Sometimes they cannot get it out of their Heads, but that they are *Athieſts* and *Infidels*; they neither believe in God nor in Jeſus Chriſt, nor have any ſenſe at all of Religion.

Sometimes they are tormented with *Blaſphemous* Thoughts, and they cannot ſet themſelves to the Performance of any Office of Devotion, but a thouſand impious Fancies will come in and ſpoil all.

Sometimes they fancy they are guilty of ſeveral grievous Crimes, which it is to be hoped, it was hardly poſſible they ſhould be guilty of; nay, you cannot convince them but that they do every day commit ſome of theſe Crimes, becauſe they imagine they give conſent to them.

And whilſt theſe ſorts of Thoughts fill their Imaginations, there is not a Paſſage in the Bible that they read, nor a Sermon that they hear, but they find ſomething in it, which they do ſo perverſly apply to their own Caſe, as thereby to increaſe their trouble, but not to get any relief.

I have

I have known ſeveral well-diſpoſed Perſons, and ſome of them ſincerely Pious, that have been in this Condition.

What now is to be ſaid to this? Why, it is very certain that all theſe Thoughts and Fancies are thruſt upon them, and are not the free, natural, voluntary Operations of their own Minds; but the effects of Vapours or Hypochondriac Melancholly. Nor can the Perſons themſelves any more help their thus thinking, or fancying, than they can help the Diſturbances of their Dreams when they have a mind to ſleep quietly. Indeed we may properly enough call theſe *Fancies* of theirs, their *waking Dreams*; as their *Dreams* are their *ſleeping Fancies*.

Well but now of all Perſons whatſoever, theſe People are moſt deſirous to have *Rules* given them for the Government of the Thoughts. And I cannot blame them, becauſe their Thoughts are certainly very Troubleſome. But truly if we would ſpeak pertinently to their Caſe, inſtead of giving them Advices for the regulating their *Thoughts*, they ſhould rather be adviſed to look after their *Bodies*, and by the help of good Preſcriptions to get rid of thoſe *Fumes* and *Vapours* which occaſion theſe Fancies. When the Cauſe is removed, the Effect will ſoon ceaſe. I do not in the leaſt doubt, whatever theſe People may think of their own Caſe, but that this is as properly a *Bodily* Diſeaſe, as a *Feaver*, or Fits of the *Falling Sickneſs*.

In the mean time, while they are in this Condition, whatever Rules are proper to be given to other Perſons for the *Government* of the *Thoughts*, of all People living thoſe *Rules* do the leaſt concern them. For thoſe Thoughts which they complain of, do not at all fall under Regulation or Government, becauſe they are ſuggeſted to their Minds whether they will or no. And for my part, I think it a great deal more adviſable (if it could be) to neglect and deſpiſe them; than to be perpetually ſtrugling and diſputing with them, and vexing themſelves about them.

But,

But, you will ſay, if Men be ſuch Slaves to their *Thoughts*, and are thus neceſſarily paſſive under them, where is the Freedom of *Thoughts*? To this I anſwer,

In the *fourth* place, out of theſe *three* Caſes I before mentioned, we have *Liberty of Thinking*, and may chuſe our own Thoughts. And that Liberty and Freedom we have in *Thinking*, doth, to my apprehenſion, mainly conſiſt in this, *viz.* That all of us (who are not in the Circumſtances I have been hitherto ſpeaking of) can, if we pleaſe, apply our Minds more vigorouſly to one ſort of thing than to another; and accordingly as we do thus apply our Minds, ſo will the moſt of our *Thoughts* be.

It is in our power among the multitude of Objects which preſent themſelves to our Mind, (as for Inſtance, *God*, *Vertue*, *Holineſs*, *Heaven*, *Wealth*, *Power*, *Greatneſs*, *Preferments*, *Fine Clothes*, *Splendid Equipage*, *Senſual Pleaſures*, *Recreations*, *Divertiſements*, *Knowledge*, *Learning*, *Arts*, and the like: I ſay, that among all this multitude of Objects that preſent themſelves to our Minds) it is in our power to determine our ſelves, which of them we will dwell upon, and make a *Buſineſs* of. And accordingly, when at any time we have pitched upon any of them, as a *Buſineſs*, it is in our power to mind that *Buſineſs*, either more or leſs diligently. And if it be ſuch a one, as that we mean in good earneſt to concern our ſelves about it, it will then ſo fill our Minds, as that by attending to that, we ſhall either prevent in a great meaſure other Thoughts from coming into our Heads; or if they do come in, they will not long ſtay there, but will very ſpeedily give place to that which is our main Buſineſs at that time.

And the Reaſon of this is plain; Becauſe our Natures are of that make, that two things at once cannot well poſſeſs our Minds; and therefore if we be intent about one thing, we cannot have much room or leiſure for Thoughts of another Nature.

But then *Fifthly* and laſtly, Though this that I have ſaid be the true Nature of that power we have over our Thoughts, as to the directing them to a particular Object:

Object: Yet there is another power we have over them that ought here more eſpecially to be conſidered; becauſe in it are laid the very Foundations of *Vertue* and *Vice*, and upon account of it, all our Thoughts become either morally *good* or *evil*.

That which I mean is this. Though we cannot in many Caſes, think always of what we would; nay, though we cannot hinder abundance of Thoughts from coming into our Minds againſt our will: Yet it is always in our power to aſſent to our Thoughts, or to deny our Conſent to them. And here it is that the *Morality* of our *Thoughts* begins. According as we *Aſſent* or *Diſſent* to the Motions that are made in our Minds; ſo will our *Thoughts* have the Notion of *Vertuous* or *Sinful* Thoughts.

When any Temptations are preſented to us from without, we cannot perhaps (as I ſaid before) avoid the feeling an irregular Paſſion, or Motion, or Inclination ſtirring within us upon occaſion thereof: But yet at that very time it is in our Power, whether we will comply with thoſe Paſſions and Inclinations, or not; whether we will conſent to them, or not; whether we will purſue them further or not. Now if we do not conſent to them, but endeavour to ſtop, and ſtifle, and reſiſt them as ſoon as we are aware of them; there is yet no harm done. Our *Thoughts*, how undecent or irregular ſoever they were, are rather to be accounted the *Infirmities* of our *Corrupt* Nature, than our *Sins* properly ſo called.

And thus it is likewiſe as to our *Wandering Thoughts* in our *Prayers*. If we ſtrive againſt them, and endeavour to keep our Minds in a Devout compoſed Temper, and attend as well as we can to the Duty we are about: I ſay, if we do this, I hope thoſe *Diſtractions* and *Wanderings* will never riſe up in Judgment againſt us.

And as for the frightful *Blaſphemous* Fancies, which as I told you, ſome, even Pious Perſons, are tormented with: As to them, I ſay, they, of all other irregular *Thoughts*, have the leaſt danger of Sin in them, though they

they be not ſo ſolemnly and formally diſputed with, and conteſted againſt. Becauſe indeed they are ſo terrible in their own Nature, that no Man in his Wits, and that hath any ſenſe of God or Goodneſs, can be ſuppoſed to conſent to them. They are indeed great *Infelicities*, but by no means any *Sin*, any farther than we approve of them; and to approve of them for any tolerably good Man is impoſſible.

But then on the other ſide, If we conſent to any wicked Motion or Inclination that we feel in our ſelves; let it come in how it will, never ſo ſuddenly, never ſo unexpectedly; if we cloſe with any *Thought* that prompts us to Evil, ſo as to be pleaſed with it, to delight in it, to think of purſuing it, till it be brought into Action: in that caſe we are no longer to plead our *Original Corruption*: for in that very inſtant we become *Actual Sinners*, Actual Tranſgreſſors of the Law of God, the Obligation of which reaches to our very Hearts and Thoughts as well as our Actions. Tho yet we are not ſo great Tranſgreſſors, ſo long as our Sin is only in Thought, or Deſire, or Purpoſe; as if it had proceeded to outward Action.

All this is taught us for true Divinity, by no leſs an Author than St. *James*, in the firſt Chapter of his *Epiſtle*, v. 13, 14, 15. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God tempteth no man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringing forth ſin, and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.*

Which paſſage of the Apoſtle doth plainly contain theſe *three* Propoſitions.

Firſt, That no Man is drawn to commit Sin by any State or Condition that God hath put him into; no, not by any Temptation, either outward or inward, that is preſented to him. It is not a Sin to be tempted; no, nor to feel that we are tempted by ſome diſorderly Inclination that ariſes in our Minds thereupon.

But,

But, *secondly*, then our Sin begins, when we yield to the Temptation, when we are *drawn away by our own Lusts, and enticed*, when they get the Victory over us, and we do consent to them. Then *Lust hath conceived, and bringeth forth Sin.*

But, *Thirdly*, Though the very consent of our Wills to a Temptation, be a Sin in us; yet that Sin is not so great as it will be afterwards, if it be brought to Action. Sin in the desire or purpose, is but an *Embryo*; it is but the first Rudiments of Sin; but when it comes to be acted, it is then a Sin in its full dimensions; and the Consequents of it may be Fatal without Repentance. *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth Death.*

Having thus given some Account, how far our *Hearts* or *Thoughts* do fall under *Government*; I now come to my *Second* Point, that is, to treat of the *Art of Governing them*, or to lay down the necessary *Rules* and *Directions*, which are to be observed in order thereunto.

And we shall not need to go far for these *Rules*, for they will all naturally flow from the Principles I have already laid down. And I think, they may conveniently enough be reduced likewise to these *Five* following.

First, From what hath been said, it appears, that the *First* and great Point to be done by us, if we would keep our *Hearts* in a good Frame, and order our *Thoughts* to good purposes, is, that we rightly pitch our main Designs; that we chuse that for the great business of our Lives, that really ought to be so.

Now what that is, can bear no dispute with any Man that will fairly use his Reason: For certainly, that which is our greatest Concernment in the World, ought to be our greatest Business and Design in the World,

And it is evident to every one, that believes he hath a Soul to save, that his greatest Concernment of all, is, to approve himself to that God who made him, and disposes of all his affairs; and who accordingly as we

we ſincerely endeavour, or not endeavour to ſerve him, will make us either very Happy, or very Miſerable, both in this Life and the other. So that there can, as I ſaid, be no diſpute about what ought to be the great Buſineſs and Deſign of our whole Lives, and to which all other Buſineſſes muſt yield.

Now if we be ſo wiſe, as really to propoſe this as our main End, and reſolve to mind it, and follow it as ſuch; I ſay, if we be ſo wiſe as to do this; we have made a very great ſtep towards the obtaining a ſecurity to our ſelves, that the greateſt part of our Thoughts, and Deſires, and Affections, will be ſuch as they ſhould be; ſuch as will be acceptable to God, and ſatisfactory to our ſelves.

For as I told you before, whatever is our main Buſineſs, be it what it will, it will in a great meaſure, draw all our Thoughts to it. Our Natures are ſo contrived, that we muſt always be thinking of ſome thing or other. But then they are ſo contrived likewiſe, that we think moſt of that, which is moſt in our Eye, moſt in our Eſteem, moſt in our Purſuit. And this is that which our Saviour tells us; *Where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo.* Whatever it be that you place your Happineſs in, upon that will your Thoughts run; upon that will your Deſires, your Inclinations, your Affections, be fixed.

We have a World of Inſtances of the truth of this every day before our Eyes. If a Man hath ſet his Heart on *Money*, and propoſeth it to himſelf, as the *Buſineſs* of his Life, to be Rich: Why, I dare ſay, ſuch a one will own to you, that moſt of his Thoughts are upon that Project; and that he finds it ſo far from being difficult to keep his Mind cloſe and ſteady to his *Main Intereſt*, as he calls it; that it is rather difficult to him to think of any other Matters.

If a Man be given up to *Pleaſure*, and thinks nothing worthy his living for, but Wine and Women, and good Eating and good Company; is it not natural to ſuch an one to bend all his Thoughts that way? Or doth he put any force or violence upon himſelf, in thinking

thinking and contriving all the day long, how to bring to paſs the Gratification of his Luſts or his Appetites.

Why, my *Brethren*, if we did all of us in good earneſt make the Service of God, and the purchaſing Heaven and Happineſs to our ſelves, as much our Buſineſs, our End, our Deſign, as theſe Men make Wealth or Pleaſure to be theirs, we ſhould certainly be thus affected. The common Courſe of our *Thoughts*, would naturally and eaſily without the leaſt conſtraint, run upon thoſe Objects: And we ſhould take as great delight in thinking of *our* Treaſure, and contriving for the obtaining of it; as they do in thinking and Projecting for theirs.

I ſay, Thus it would be with us. For I cannot for my Life apprehend, what Charms there can be in Worldly or Senſual Things, to attract a Man's Mind; what Fetters there can be in them, to *bind* his *Thoughts* and tye them to themſelves: But that there are the ſame, or greater, in Vertue and Goodneſs; in the Love and Favour of God; in a Pure Conſcience here, and Eternal Glory hereafter: Always provided, that they are as much made the Objects of our Choice and Purſuit, as the other.

And therefore I cannot but ſuſpect, where we ſee Men ſo very cold and backward to Spiritual Things; and ſo apt to ſpend all their Thoughts upon trifling, vain, or worldly Matters, that it is with a great deal of Pains and Reluctancy, that they can bring themſelves to think of their Everlaſting Concernments: I ſay, I cannot but ſuſpect that theſe Perſons have not yet *laid up their Treaſure in Heaven*, as our Saviour expreſſeth it; they have not yet ſo wholly devoted themſelves to the Service of God, as to make it their *Main Buſineſs*. When once they have done that I dare aſſure them, they will find it ſo far from being a force upon them, to think of good things, that will be very natural to them; and they will find the greateſt Pleaſure in the World in ſo doing.

Secondly,

Secondly, Whoever would *keep* his *Heart* always in a good Frame, and be able to give a good Account of his Thoughts to God, muſt have an eſpecial care to avoid *two* things, *viz. Idleneſs and looſe Company.* For both of theſe do ſtrangely unhinge a Man's Mind; and diſarm it of that Severity, which is its beſt guard and defence againſt Evil Thoughts, and make it become an eaſie prey to every Temptation that will attacque it.

A wiſe Man ſhould never be at ſuch a paſs, as to ſay *I have nothing to do, I do not know how to ſpend my next Hour*: But ſhould ſo order the Courſe of his Life, that all the Portions of his Time, as much as is poſſible, may be filled with ſome uſeful, or at leaſt ſome innocent Imployment.

It is *Idleneſs*, and having nothing to do, that is the Mother of moſt of thoſe vain, and unprofitable, and ſinful Fancies, in which ſome Men ſpend their days. And whereas Temptations do now and then come in the way of other Men; the *Idle* Man is forced to ſeek out Temptations for the ſhipwrack of his Vertue. And therefore no wonder, if he that ſeeks them, finds abundance of them.

And truly *Looſe* and *Impertinent Converſation*, which was the other thing I named, though it looks ſomething with a better Grace, yet is not much better than Idleneſs. For where-ever it is much uſed, it will ſo emaſculate a Man's Mind, and take off the edge and vigour of it, as to ſerious things, that he cannot eaſily get it into a good Frame again *Evil Communication* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *doth corrupt good Manners.* And therefore thoſe People, a great part of whoſe Life is taken up in gadding up and down; in Play; in merry Meetings; in telling or hearing idle Stories, and the like: It is impoſſible but their Thoughts and Inclinations, and the whole Frame of their Hearts will be ſuitable; that is to ſay, very frothy; very light and fooliſh; not to ſay profane, and wicked, and Atheiſtical too, if the Company they much converſe with be of that ſtrain.

Thirdly, Another thing of great moment, for the *keeping our Hearts*, is, to be as attentive as is poſſible to the *firſt Motions* of our Minds; and whenever we find that they tend toward ſomething that is forbidden, to ſtop them as ſoon as we can.

We cannot, as I told you before, often prevent irregular Deſires, or Paſſions, or Inclinations, from ariſing in our Minds, upon ſundry occaſions. But this we can do: As ſoon as we are aware of them, we can refuſe our Conſent to them; (and in that caſe I hope they will not be imputed to us as Sins;) Nay, not only ſo, but we can refuſe their breaking out, or ſhewing themſelves in our *Words*, or our *Actions*. For the Motions of our outward Members are all at our Command, though the firſt Motions of our Minds be not.

Here therefore will lye a main Point in the Art of well governing our Minds and Thoughts. You cannot perhaps, for inſtance, prevent a ſudden Paſſion of *Anger* from riſing in your Minds upon *twenty* Accidents: But as ſoon as you feel this Paſſion, you can thus far ſtifle it, you can ſeal up your Mouth, ſo that the Paſſion ſhall not vent it ſelf in unſeemly Words; And if you will withdraw that Fuel from the new-kindled Fire, it will ſoon be extinguiſhed, and die. Whereas if you ſuffer it to break out in bitter Speeches and Expreſſions, it will flame beyond meaſure.

Thus again, If any undecent, impure Fancies or Deſires ſhould be excited in you upon any occaſion: It was not perhaps in your power to keep them from coming into your Minds: But it is in your power to withdraw from the Temptation that cauſed them; and to endeavour to direct your Thoughts to ſome other Object; at leaſt not to proceed one ſtep in any outward Action towards the accompliſhing of thoſe Deſires. If you take this Courſe, the Diſturbance of your Mind will ſoon ceaſe, and you will return preſently to your ordinary Temper.

And let me tell you this further; That by your being thus careful to reſiſt and ſmother the firſt beginnings of Sin; you will not only preſerve, in a great meaſure, the Innocency of your Minds under the preſent Temptation; but you will alſo have this farther advantage, that by this means, you increaſe your Power over your Thoughts, againſt the next time that the Temptation returns. Every check you give to the firſt Motions of Sin, makes the next aſſault of them the leſs furious. And if you do conſtantly uſe your ſelves, thus to Guard and Watch over your Hearts, you will in time obtain ſuch a Command over them, that you will not be troubled with a quarter of thoſe irregular deſires, and paſſions, which heretofore upon ſeveral Occaſions uſed to be kindled in you. By this Method you will ſtrengthen your Faculties, and enlarge your Powers; and by degrees bring your ſelves to that happy Temper of Soul, that there will be no great *War* between the *Law* of your *Members*, and the *Law* of your *Minds*: But the *World* and the *Fleſh* will be *crucified* to you, as you are to them; that I may uſe St. *Paul*'s Expreſſions.

But then *Fourthly*, That you may be able not only to keep *bad* Thoughts out of your Minds, but alſo to have a conſtant ſpring of *good* ones; there are ſome particular *Exerciſes* very proper for this purpoſe to be recommended. Such I mean as theſe, *Converſe with diſcreet and pious Perſons who read good Books*, eſpecially the *Holy Scriptures*, taking times of *Meditation* and *Recollection*; and above all, *Fervent and Conſtant Prayer to God.*

It is not to be told how every one of theſe things doth help to inſpire us with good Thoughts and Purpoſes.

A little paſſage now and then, though but occaſionally dropt in a Converſation, that is to the buſineſs of *Vertue* and *Goodneſs*, will ſupply us ſometimes with matter for good *Thoughts* for a conſiderable while after. What laſting Impreſſions then, do you think,

would be left upon our Minds, if we made it our conſtant Exerciſe every day, to read or hear ſomething out of the *Bible*, or ſome other *good Book*, with a deſign to grow Better thereby?

But above all things, we muſt take care to be diligent and ſerious in our Applications to the Throne of Grace: It is Hearty Prayer and Devotion, that when all is done, will prove the moſt Effectual Means, for the keeping our Hearts ſteady to that which is Good, and ſecuring them from the pollutions of the ſenſible Earthly Objects that do ſurround us.

O therefore let us be conſtant in our Religious Offices. Nay, let us take every opportunity that our Affairs will allow us, of raiſing our Minds to God, and thanking him for his Infinite Love and Goodneſs to us; and imploring the continual Influences of his Grace and Holy Spirit, and re-inforcing our Vows and Purpoſes of perſevering in his Service.

By this means we ſhall come to lead Spiritual Lives indeed. Our Souls will be a perpetual Fountain of Good Thoughts. And while we live here our Converſation will be in Heaven. For God and Chriſt, and the things above will have our *Hearts*, though the World hath our *Bodies*.

But then, in the *Fifth* and laſt place, Notwithſtanding what I have hitherto ſaid, concerning the *Diligence* with which we are to *keep* our *Hearts*; yet this is always to be remembered, That with our *Diligence* we muſt be careful to join *Diſcretion*.

My Meaning is this, We muſt have a care not to *intend* our Thoughts immoderately, and more than our Tempers will bear, even to the beſt things: But we muſt ſo *keep* our *Hearts*, as at the ſame time to preſerve our *Healths*, and keep up the Vigour of our Minds.

And the way to do that, is, Not to put them too much, or too long, upon the ſtretch at any one time: But to relax them when there is occaſion, and to let them

them run out, and entertain themſelves upon any thing that comes next to hand, ſo long as it is Innocent.

It is a vain thing to imagine, that we can always be thinking of our great Buſineſs; or that we can always be a Praying, or Reading, or Meditating; or, that, as our Condition is in this World, even the greater part of our *Thoughts* ſhould be ſuch as we call *Devout* and *Religious Thoughts.*

God hath provided a great deal of other Buſineſs for us to apply our Minds to, ſo long as we live in this World. And by minding that diligently and conſcientiouſly, we do ſerve God as acceptably, as if we were Reading or Praying.

Nay even then, when we have no urgent Buſineſs upon our hands to take up our Minds, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould be always thinking of Religion. Nor would I call every Thought, a *vain*, or an *idle*, or a *ſinful* Thought, that hath not God, or our Spiritual Concernments for its Object. Even the moſt Spiritually-minded among us, muſt oftentimes be content to be entertained with ſuch *Thoughts* as our Company, or our Temper, or the preſent Circumſtances we are in, do ſuggeſt to us. And provided thoſe *Thoughts* be innocent, and do not intrench upon the Laws of *Piety*, and *Purity*, and *Charity*; be they otherwiſe very trifling and impertinent: I ſay, I would not look upon them as *ill Thoughts*, nor have any one angry at himſelf upon account of them.

The truth of it is, So long as we conſiſt of Bodies and Souls, we cannot always be thinking of ſerious things. They indeed are the Wiſeſt that think of them moſt, but it is even dangerous to attempt to think of them always. For, as moſt Mens Conſtitutions are, that is the ready way to ſpoil the Habit of our Bodies, and by that means to render our Minds perfectly unfit for *Thinking* at all to any good Purpoſes.

Thus have I laid before you the Main Things wherein, as I do believe, the right *Governing our Thoughts* doth conſiſt. And I doubt not, they are ſo ſafe, and ſo effectual,

effectual, that whoſoever will ſincerely practiſe them, as far as he can, will ſo *keep* his *Heart*, that the *Iſſues* from thence in his *Life* and *Converſation* will be Happy and Proſperous. I conclude all with the *Collect* of this Day.

Almighty God, who ſeeſt that we have no power of our ſelves to help our ſelves; Keep us both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls; that we may be defended from all Adverſities which may happen to the Body, and from all EVIL THOUGHTS *which may aſſault and hurt the Soul, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

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